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Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Offers Grants to Help Private Landowners Improve Wildlife Habitat

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) is accepting grant applications through December 21 from private landowners, sportsmen's clubs, land trusts and non-profit organizations interested in enhancing wildlife habitat on their properties. MassWildlife's Landowner Incentive Program reimburses private landowners for up to 75 percent of the cost of managing land to improve habitat for declining wildlife species.

"With about three-quarters of the Commonwealth's land in private ownership, restoring and maintaining wildlife habitat on these properties is essential to promoting the survival of many rare species," said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin, whose agency includes MassWildlife.

The Landowner Incentive Program has provided over \$2.1 million for 108 habitat improvement projects since the first round of grants in 2005. Nesting shorebirds, rare turtles, and grassland birds are among the creatures that have benefited from work on 7,100 acres of habitat affecting 122 at-risk wildlife species. The New England cottontail, Plymouth red-belly cooter, bog turtle, blue-spotted salamander and grassland birds are examples of species whose habitats have declined over the years. This year's grant round will give preference to proposed projects to maintain grasslands and create young tree and shrub land habitats. Funding for the Massachusetts program is allocated by US Fish and Wildlife Service under a nationwide Landowner Incentive Program.

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Goals of the Landowner Incentive Program include identifying and reclaiming appropriate sites for management of declining habitats, managing and controlling exotic and invasive plants, upgrading habitat for at-risk native species, and providing technical and financial assistance and guidance to landowners on how to manage their property for wildlife. For more information about the Landowner Incentive Program and the grant application and criteria, visit www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/grants/lip/lip_home.htm.

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